

Citizens Liaison Committee to Community Center
Minutes – April 26, 2005 – at Takoma Park rec center, 7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Meeting convened at 7:35 p.m.

Members present:

Howard Kohn — chair, Annie Mozer – recorder

Sheryl Brugh, Andy Kelemen, Erik Lichtenberg, Maurice Belanger, Dallas Burtraw, Cindy Dyballa, Karen Mendez, Stephen Brown, Paul Chrostowski, Lorraine Pearsall

Staff: Debra Haiduven

Item One -- Discussion of projected budget of community center

Debra – Rec Dept. earned \$4K last year from rental fees. This number should increase with opening of C-Center, but hard to project revenues. Rental space for outside groups will be very limited if we adopt a community-first approach.

Debra -- Most rental facilities allow for alcohol, which we currently do not. Nor do we have a kitchen at this point, which discourages rental groups. In the contract now out for bid a kitchen is an alternate, so Council may decide to include it.

(General consensus that Council should include a kitchen.)

Debra -- Council plans to hold a public hearing before deciding between community-first approach or max-revenue approach. Council also is deciding on which community groups qualify for 6-12 free rentals a year.

HK – The Recreation Committee recommended the City Manager set up criteria and decide on the list of qualified groups. Groups need to apply to get on the list. Otherwise the process is too nebulous.

Andy-- Will citizen committees get free use?

HK – I would assume so, but there should be a procedure in place with an authority to accept or reject certain groups.

Debra – Montgomery County allows 6 free rentals /yr. Greenbelt has a similar arrangement, but other community centers don't allow free use. They have a sliding scale. We are proposing a limit on free rentals, with sliding scale of fees. Community groups would pay less even when they have to rent. Other groups would pay more.

Karen – A lot of people live nearby, but not in T-Park. They would rent space, but not if the rates are too high.

Debra – The staff recommendation is to use the new spaces to serve our own community. We want some revenue, but our rates should be consistent with other facilities. We shouldn't be exorbitant and discourage other users. The City will follow one of those models.

HK – The public hearing is the place to voice your opinion.

Item Two – Report on “green features” in new renovation contract.

Paul – We had several meetings with city staff that were very successful. We incorporated several green features in the RFP, including indoor air & energy savings. I was extremely pleased. All the items the Committee asked for as “mandatory” were incorporated.

Andy – Was solar included?

Paul – No, that is an add-on for later. It's a single-source contract.

Paul -- With gym, we have a chance to start at beginning and include “green” in the entire design. We could have a gym with virtually no utility cost if designed appropriately.

HK – One idea is to use steel instead of cinderblock for the gym structure, with a skin covered with a brick veneer. It would be cheaper, but it may not be as “green.”

Stephen – Usually higher heating costs with a steel-frame structure.

Cindy – We should understand pros & cons of steel vs. cinderblock.

(Consensus to set up a working group to study steel structure. Paul, Cindy & HK volunteer for the group.)

HK -- Kudos to Paul for getting “green” into RFP. Wouldn’t have happened without him.

Item Three – Preliminary report about parking requirements

HK – Suzanne Ludlow will make full presentation next meeting. Based on old information, the requirement was 217 with a gym. That number was reduced to 195 -- discounted by 10% because of public transportation, walkers and cyclists. Currently we will have 145. We could get 25 under the gym, and 15-30 on Maple Ave. And maybe use the school lots and apartment lots on special occasions.

Bottomline, parking is not solved, and we’ll have to be creative to find low-cost options.

Erik – Is parking for police and city vehicles included in these numbers?

Andy – Are police spaces protected?

Debra -- Only spaces reserved are for employees who would use them 24 hrs a day. Very few in this category.

HK – The overall formula is a little complex because of city employees.

Paul – Does the 195 include parking behind the Library?

HK – yes, the Library is now considered part of the municipal complex.

Dallas – Wilhelm lot is also possible for overflow, but it needs lighting. Important not to put burden on residential streets.

HK – The County suggested we use a system of “schedule management” – never schedule two big events for the same time.

Andy – Traffic management and pedestrian crossings must be part of the overall plan.

(Discussion to be continued next time.)

Item Four – Review of optional sites for gym

HK – If parking can’t be ultimately resolved then we will have to look elsewhere for gym site. (Hands out old survey of optional sites.)

Lorraine – Jeque Park shouldn’t be on this list. No parks should be destroyed.

HK – One reason we ended up at current site is that we didn’t want to take green space. So we selected a “brown” site.

Debra - The survey illustrates why this site was chosen. It’s still the best site.

Item Five – Making a case for a gym

(Maurice, Peter and HK are preparing a preliminary report.)

HK – Everyone should read Virginia Kelly’s front page article in the City Newsletter about how gyms in area are used and overused.

Andy – Do we need to make the case for a gym? It seems the case has been made. Let’s move forward, don’t open up argument.

HK – I think the argument is still out there. We ought to do research, vet it and be prepared to answer any and all questions as best we can.

Item Five – What should we name the entire complex?

HK – Currently we have the Municipal Building & the Library. The Municipal Building includes the administrative offices and police station. And it has a second name – the Sam Abbott Citizens Center. Now we’ve added a community center and incorporated the Library as part of the overall structure. Should the entire complex have a new name? City Hall? Civic Center?

Paul – Could we sell naming rights to highest bidder? (Laughter)

Stephen – The Reagan Building? (More laughter)

Cindy - Is there a move to give it a name?

Debra – We need to have a name on documents, city brochures, etc.

HK – We need to install a sign for front of bldg, and we need a name for way-finding signs.

Karen – Maybe at the Opening Ceremony we could have an activity to name the building.

(Further discussion postponed.)

Item Six – Report on plans for dedicating new building.

HK – Date is Sept. 24th, a Saturday afternoon. General format: A reception followed by a ribbon-cutting & speeches, which will be cut off promptly by bagpipes & drummers. Then lots of festivities – an “open house.” Art demonstrations, music, dance, other performers, step dancers, high flyers, kung fu, tai chi. Chopteeth will play in the finale. But still time to include other ideas.

(Consensus that plans sound good.)

Adjourned 9:05pm